

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 17, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Schumer:

As you begin work on the next phase of developing a recovery package, we urge you to include policies to end our nation’s maternal mortality crisis and eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in maternal health outcomes. Fifteen months into a global pandemic that has disproportionately harmed communities of color, the risks facing Black women and other birthing people of color are at a crisis point. Any recovery package that will successfully and meaningfully address the pandemic’s impact on people of color must directly address the effects of coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) on pregnant people and new moms. Specifically, we urge you to include the full \$3 billion called for in President Biden’s plan to address our maternal health crisis, as well as a permanent expansion of yearlong postpartum Medicaid coverage for every mother in every state.

As you know, the United States has the highest maternal mortality rate of any high-income country and the only rate that is rising. The pregnancy-related mortality rate for Black women in the U.S. is three to four times higher than the rate for white women,¹ and other women and birthing people of color also face elevated rates of mortality and morbidity.²

The risks for pregnant people have only grown during COVID-19: according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “pregnant and recently pregnant women are at an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19 compared to nonpregnant women.”³ CDC also found that pregnant people with COVID-19 are at an increased risk for adverse pregnancy outcomes.⁴ In addition to clinical risks, the pandemic has affected social determinants of health

¹ National Institutes of Health Office of Research on Women’s Health: *Maternal Morbidity and Mortality*. 2019.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: *Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Pregnancy-Related Deaths — United States, 2007–2016*. September 6, 2019.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: *Investigating the Impact of COVID-19 during Pregnancy*. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/special-populations/pregnancy-data-on-covid-19/what-cdc-is-doing.html>. Accessed June 4, 2021.

⁴ *Ibid.*

that contribute to maternal health disparities, like increased food insecurity, which disproportionately impacts Black and Hispanic families.⁵ Without bold and immediate action to address the heightened clinical and non-clinical threats to pregnant people and their growing families, our national recovery from COVID-19 will only exacerbate the inequities that existed before the pandemic and worsened over the past year.

Recognizing the urgent need to address these alarming trends, President Biden's American Families Plan includes a much-needed \$3 billion investment in maternal health.⁶ The President's proposal provides an opportunity to make considerable investments in federal funding to address this crisis, including policies included in the *Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act of 2021* ([H.R. 959/S. 346](#)) and a permanent expansion of yearlong postpartum Medicaid coverage. By advancing these two priorities in the upcoming recovery package, we can comprehensively address every driver of our nation's maternal health crisis.

Taking bold action to address maternal mortality in the next legislative package builds on important progress we made under your leadership through the *American Rescue Plan Act of 2021*, which included a provision to create a pathway for states to extend postpartum Medicaid coverage from the current standard of 60 days to one full year after the end of a pregnancy. This historic step will allow new mothers to access the care they need and deserve for the full postpartum period. However, the state plan option to extend postpartum coverage in the American Rescue Plan Act expires in five years. We cannot afford to take coverage away from new moms at a time when they need it most: we must include legislation like the *MOMMA's Act* ([H.R. 3407/S. 411](#)) and the *MOMMIES Act* ([H.R. 3063/S. 1542](#)) to make yearlong postpartum Medicaid coverage a permanent reality for every mom in every state in the next recovery package.

It is also essential that the upcoming legislative package includes provisions that target the multifaceted causes of our nation's maternal mortality crisis, such as those in the Momnibus, a suite of 12 essential bills that include bipartisan policies to save moms' lives, end racial and ethnic disparities, and achieve true equity and justice for all mothers and birthing people.

The Momnibus includes investments that will be needed during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, including investments in community-based organizations, policies to grow and diversify the perinatal workforce, expanded access to maternal mental health care treatments and support, measures to address the impacts of climate change on maternal and infant health outcomes, and provisions to protect pregnant people during this pandemic and future public health emergencies. These provisions build on other critical policies, like the investments in evidence-based national obstetric emergency protocol, CDC technical guidance on best practices in maternal mortality and morbidity prevention, and standardized maternal health data collection in the MOMMA's Act.

Permanently expanding postpartum Medicaid coverage and advancing policies in the Momnibus are necessary investments that will save lives, promote health equity, and advance the

⁵ Wolfson & Leung: Food Insecurity During COVID-19: An Acute Crisis With Long-Term Health Implications. November 12, 2020.

⁶ The White House: *American Families Plan*. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/american-families-plan/>. Accessed on June 2, 2021.

fundamental principle that in America, every family has a right to thrive—a principle that begins with a safe and healthy pregnancy and birth. We look forward to working with you to advance this urgent priority.

Sincerely,

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Lauren Underwood
Member of Congress

Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress

Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Lucy McBath
Member of Congress

Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

Al Lawson
Member of Congress

Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress

Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress

Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress

Mike Quigley
Member of Congress

Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

André Carson
Member of Congress

Marc Veasey
Member of Congress

Angie Craig
Member of Congress

Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress

Sharice L. Davids
Member of Congress

Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress

Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress

Darren Soto
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress

Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress

Haley Stevens
Member of Congress

Ted Deutch
Member of Congress

Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress

Karen Bass
Member of Congress

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler
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Tony Cárdenas
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G. K. Butterfield
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Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

Brenda L. Lawrence
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Albio Sires
Member of Congress

Susan Wild
Member of Congress

Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress

Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress

Carolyn Bourdeaux
Member of Congress

Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

James E. Clyburn
Member of Congress

Hakeem Jeffries
Member of Congress

Colin Allred
Member of Congress

Dwight Evans
Member of Congress

Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

Julia Brownley
Member of Congress

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Lori Trahan
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

Mondaire Jones
Member of Congress

Jason Crow
Member of Congress

Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress

Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress

Thomas Suozzi
Member of Congress

Paul Tonko
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Judy Chu
Member of Congress

Mike Doyle
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Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

Ann Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress

Jake Auchincloss
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John P. Sarbanes
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Bennie G. Thompson
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David Trone
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Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
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Yvette D. Clarke
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Ann McLane Kuster
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Chris Van Hollen
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Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

Ilhan Omar
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Debbie Dingell
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Debbie Wasserman Schultz
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David Scott
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Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
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Sara Jacobs
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Mike Levin
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Eric Swalwell
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Kim Schrier, M.D.
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Grace Meng
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Jerry McNerney
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Lois Frankel
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Kathleen M. Rice
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Joseph D. Morelle
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Nikema Williams
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Tim Ryan
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Troy A. Carter, Sr.
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Ruben Gallego
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Suzanne Bonamici
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Adriano Espaillat
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Adam Smith
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Ro Khanna
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Mikie Sherrill
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Emanuel Cleaver, II
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Tom Malinowski
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Zoe Lofgren
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John B. Larson
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Rick Larsen
Member of Congress

A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress

Joe Neguse
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Bradley S. Schneider
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

William R. Keating
Member of Congress

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Tim Kaine
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Chris Pappas
Member of Congress

Kathy E. Manning
Member of Congress

Conor Lamb
Member of Congress

Adam Schiff
Member of Congress

Val Demings
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Charlie Crist
Member of Congress

Jennifer Wexton
Member of Congress

Jamaal Bowman
Member of Congress

Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress

Bill Foster
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Cindy Axne
Member of Congress

J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress

Chrissy Houlahan
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

Dean Phillips
Member of Congress

Diana DeGette
Member of Congress

Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress

Sean Casten
Member of Congress

Maxine Waters
Member of Congress

Peter DeFazio
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Andy Levin
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Antonio Delgado
Member of Congress